

Adam Kuegler - Vice President, UConn Storrs Undergraduate Student Government
SB 343 - An Act Concerning Student Membership on the Board of Trustees for the University of Connecticut
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
March 8, 2015

My name is Adam Kuegler, and I'm the Vice President of the UConn Undergraduate Student Government and the Trustee-elect for the Undergraduate Seat on the UConn Board of Trustees.

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Bartolomeo and Willis, Ranking Members Witkos and Betts, and esteemed members of the Higher Education committee. I'm thrilled to be here today speaking on behalf of SB 343, a bill that is based on common sense and reason – a bill that appeals to the ideals of equal representation that we all share.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank the members of this committee and the entire Connecticut General Assembly for your steadfast support of a similar bill last session. Last year, when I served as the External Affairs Chairman of the Undergraduate Student Government, our committee was so proud to see the bill pass through the legislature by a vote of 180 to 1. We felt fulfilled by what the power of the student voice could achieve. Although the Governor's veto stood in the way of student success on this bill, we are back to try again. We respect our Governor, and that's why we are back to appeal to his reason and earn his support.

Fortunately, our case is not difficult to make. The numbers speak for themselves. The Board has nearly doubled in size since students gained representation, yet student representation has not increased proportionately – in fact, it has not increased at all. This is baffling considering that less than 30% of the funding that is used to operate our University comes from the State of Connecticut. With the percentage of state contributions falling, a greater percentage of what is used to operate the University must come from student fees and tuition. With about a third of the funding coming from students, why should students only have 2 seats on the 21 member board that governs the use of that money?

When I begin serving as Trustee later this year, I will be representing students from all UConn campuses across this state: Storrs, Avery Point, Torrington, Stamford, Hartford, and Waterbury. Student enrollment is rising rapidly across these campuses, yet our student representation has stayed the same. As enrollment increases rapidly, it only makes sense that students should have increased representation.

So much emphasis is being placed on the way higher education institutions spend student, state, and endowed money, so it is more important than ever that the student voice be taken into consideration. At UConn, we are taught that diverse groups consistently make the best decisions. That's why the student voice should be as strong as possible when we are discussing the budget, student life, tuition increases, employment contracts, and so many other issues that are important to students. Students are at the ground level. We understand how decisions and dollars affect us. We see where there are opportunities to save and where services are sorely needed.

There is perhaps no better place to speak about proper representation than the state legislature, where the concept is held so near and dear to you, the elected representatives of our state. Thank you for your time this afternoon. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.